

In the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 19 with the following amended paragraph:

The top hitch plate further includes a planar shelf member 44 (Figs. 4 and 5) substantially offset from the bottom surface 16, thereby creating a gap 46 between the bottom surface 16 of the hitch plate 12 and the shelf member 44. The shelf member 44 is directly connected to the forward rib 28 and is substantially spaced apart from the rearward ~~[[edge]]~~ rib 30. The shelf member 44 is partially supported by a pair of support walls 50 extending downwardly from bottom surface 16 of hitch plate 12 and rearwardly from forward rib 28. The shelf member 44 includes a locking jaw pin aperture 52 that receives a locking jaw pin 54 therein, and a hook jaw pin aperture 56 that receives a hook jaw pin 58 therein, as described below.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 28 with the following amended paragraph:

The hitch assembly 10 (Figs. 1-3) further includes a lock jaw 60 pivotably coupled to the hitch plate 12 within the throat 26 of the hitch plate 12 via the locking jaw pin 54. The locking jaw 60 is provided in a U-shape and is bifurcated into two integral branches 62 and 64. The branch 64 is a locking branch, while the branch 62 will be called, for convenience, a camming branch. The central axis of the locking jaw pin 54 is laterally offset from the dead end portion of the throat 26. The locking jaw 60 pivots on the pin 54 between the fully closed and locked position, as shown in Fig. 1, an unlocked position, as shown in Fig. 2, and the fully opened or "ready to couple" position, as shown in Fig. 3. The locking jaw 60 has a concave recess (king pin lock surface) 66 located between the branches 62 and 64 to cooperate with a concave forward end 68 of the throat 26, thereby cylindrically surrounding a neck portion of the king pin (not shown). The branch 62 is generally forward of the central axis of the locking jaw pin 54, while the branch 64 is generally rearward of this axis, except in the fully open position of the locking jaw 60. The forwardly-located branch 62 includes a protruding finger 70

having a camming surface 72 near the end thereof. The rearward branch 64 includes ~~[[a]]~~ the concave king pin lock surface 66 on an inner surface and a concave hook-receiving recess 76 on an outer surface thereof.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 7, line 14 with the following amended paragraph:

The hitch assembly 10 further includes a hook jaw 78 located adjacent the throat 26 and pivotably mounted to the hitch plate 12 via the hook jaw pin 58. The hook jaw 78 is C-shaped and defines a concave recess 80 that receives a distal end 77 of the locking jaw 60 therein when the hitch assembly 10 is in the fully locked position, and a distal end 82 that is received within the recess ~~[[74]]~~ 76 of the locking jaw 60 when the hitch assembly 10 is in the fully locked position.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 7, line 20 with the following amended paragraph:

The hitch assembly 10 further includes a hitch actuator assembly 84 that includes a manual actuator handle or release lever 86 slidably coupled to the hitch plate 12, and operable between a retracted position corresponding to the locked position of the hitch assembly 10, as shown in Fig. 1, and an extended position corresponding to the fully open position of the hitch assembly 10, as shown in Fig. 3. The actuator assembly 84 also includes an L-shaped first linkage member 88 having a first end 90 pivotally coupled to the release lever 86 at a pivot point 92, a second end 94 pivotally coupled to the hitch plate 12 at a pivot point 96, and a pivot point 98 located at a midpoint of the first linkage member 88 located between the first end 90 and the second end 94. A second linkage member 100 includes a first end 102 pivotally coupled at the pivot point 98 to the first linkage member 88, and a second end 104. The second linkage member 100 includes a longitudinally-extending slot 106 having a bend 108 along the length thereof. The second linkage member 100 is slidably coupled to the hitch plate 12 via hardware 110, such as a machined bolt, that extends through the slot 106. A third linkage member 112 has a first end 114 that is pivotally coupled to the

second end 104 of the second linkage member 100 at a pivot point 116, and a second end 118 pivotably coupled to the hook jaw 78 at a pivot point 120 located along the length thereof. The release lever 86, linkage members 88, 100 and 112, and the associated pivot points 92, 96, 98, 116 and 120 are assembled such that pivot point 116 between second linkage member 100 and third linkage member 112 is located rearwardly of pivot point 120 between third linkage member 112 and hook jaw 78, that is in turn located rearwardly of the pivot point formed by hook jaw pin 58 about which the hook jaw 78 rotates, when the hitch assembly 10 is in the fully locked position. As a result, a force exerted by the hook jaw 78 in a direction represented by direction arrow 122 creates a moment arm force about pivot point 116, resulting in a torquing force about pivot point 116 in a direction as indicated by directional arrow 124, thereby causing the second linkage arm 100 to pivot about the connector 110 in a direction as indicated by directional arrow 126, resulting in a force being exerted on the pivot point 116 and the pivot point 118 in a direction as indicated by directional arrow 128, and forcing the hook jaw 78 to remain engaged with the locking jaw 60. The force exerted on the hook jaw 78 in a direction as indicated by directional arrow 128 reduces the force required to be exerted by a coil spring 129 positioned so as to bias the release lever 86 towards the retracted position and increases the lock-up pressure of the hitch assembly 10 when in the fully locked position. Because the bias force that must be exerted by spring 129 is reduced, a spring may be utilized that requires less pulling force to be applied to release handle 86. As a result, the pull force required to release the lock may be reduced to as low as 30 pounds, which is half that required for conventional release handles.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 8, line 26 with the following amended paragraph:

The hitch assembly 10 further includes a hook jaw adjustment assembly 130 (Figs. 6-8) that includes the hook jaw pin 58, an adjustment pin 132, and a biasing spring 134. The hook jaw pin 58 includes a shank 136 having a first portion 138, a second or cammed portion 140, and a third portion 142. The third portion 142 has a

circumferentially-extending groove 144. The hook jaw pin 58 also includes a head portion 145 having a top surface 146, a bottom surface 148, and a side edge 150. The side edge 150 includes a plurality of inwardly-extending notches or recesses 152 spaced circumferentially thereabout, and sized to receive the adjustment pin 132 therein, as described below. In assembly, the hook jaw pin 58 is retained within an aperture 154 extending through hitch plate 12 and the aperture 56 of the shelf member 44 by a retainer 156 that engages the groove 144 of the third portion 142. The cammed portion 140 of the hook jaw pin 58 is located within the pivoting aperture ~~[[158]]~~ 157 of the hook jaw 78. The top surface 146 of the hook jaw pin 58 is substantially flush with the top surface 14 of the hitch plate 12 when the hook jaw pin 58 is assembled within the hitch assembly 10. The adjustment pin 132 is located within an adjustment aperture ~~[[158]]~~ 157, and is biased upwardly by a coil spring 134, such that a collar 160 abuts the bottom surface 148 of the head portion 145 of the pin 58 and the adjustment pin 132 is located within one of the notches 152, thereby preventing rotation of the pin 58. To adjust the location of the hook jaw 78 with respect to the hitch plate 12, the adjustment pin 132 is depressed downwardly against the biasing spring 134 until the head portion 145 of the pin 58 is able to rotate past the adjustment pin 132. The head portion 145 of the pin 58 is provided with a slot-shaped aperture 162 adapted to receive the head of a standard-type screwdriver therein, thereby allowing easy rotation of the pin 58 once the adjustment pin 132 is depressed. Such an arrangement allows easy adjustment of the hook jaw 78 from the top of the hitch assembly as may be needed due to wear.